

IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

REVISION & UPDATE OF CHAPTER 246-100-166 WAC

MAY 11, 2005

REQUIRING VARICELLA FOR CHILD CARE AND SCHOOL: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECOMMENDATION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this rule revision process is to add varicella as a required vaccine for child care and school entry. Washington is one of the few remaining states without a varicella requirement. Although Washington State does not have a requirement, the immunization program has made the vaccine available to children birth to eighteen years since 1996. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Medicine recommend vaccination of children against varicella. Children who do not contract the disease or receive the vaccination during childhood face serious complications as adults if they contract the disease later in life. Shingles (Herpes zoster) is a painful viral infection, caused by the chicken pox virus. Shingles is a second outbreak of chicken pox which occurs when the virus, which remains dormant after the first infection, is reactivated when an individual's immune system is weakened.

In early 2005, the Department of Health presented a number of implementation options to the Vaccine Advisory Committee and asked it to evaluate them based on the following considerations:

- Fit with the ACIP immunization schedule,
- Fit with Well-Child Visit schedule,
- Fit with age at school entry,
- Risk of disease, and
- Ease of implementation.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING REVIEW OF THIS RULE:

- **Implications for the universal system of vaccine distribution**

Washington State currently operates under a policy of universal access and distribution, where a number of vaccines are made available for all children at no cost to the provider and patient's family (except for the cost of administering the vaccine). The underlying assumption is that universal policy creates greater access to vaccination than a non-universal system and, in our state, blends efficiently with our primary health care system. The sustainability of the universal system comes into question as additional vaccines are mandated.

- **Budgetary implications**

Currently, the Department does not have funds to purchase additional vaccines to cover the increased demand for adding varicella to the list of immunizations required for school entry. Vaccine funding is supported by a combination of federal and state funding sources. After the Board revises WAC 246-100-166, the Department will submit a supplemental request for state general funds. In addition, the Department must apply for federal funds.

Schedule for request and receipt of state funds:

- Supplemental vaccine request presented to Office of Financial Management September 2005
- Supplemental requires approval of the legislature, which will be known following legislative session in March 2006
- State funding would be available for purchasing the vaccine on July 1, 2006 if approved

Schedule for request and receipt of Federal funds:

- Federal grant request submitted September 2005
- Preliminary grant award received January 2006
- Final adjustments to grant award in October 2006

► **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECOMMENDATION**

Consistent with the Vaccine Advisory Committee recommendation, immunity to varicella should be required for children who are 19 months through 12 years old. The Department recommends that immunization status for varicella be required when seeking admission into child care centers, school entry into kindergarten and entry into the sixth grade beginning the 2006-2007 school year.

The Department intends to apply for an amount of state and federal funds sufficient to implement the recommendation as stated, however the amount of funds actually received will not be known until after the end of the 2006 legislative session. Full implementation of this recommendation is contingent on receipt of funding amounts requested by the Department. If the full amount is not awarded, the Department may seek approval from the Board to implement this recommendation in phases as permitted by the draft rule. Emphasis would be placed on adolescents since this is consistent with the Vaccine Advisory Committee recommendation that emphasized immunity for older children as a priority due to the risk of severity of disease complications among adolescents.

NEXT STEPS

- Department and Board staff are finalizing the proposed rule package
- The Department is developing a supplemental budget request for the 2006 legislative session
- The public hearing is scheduled for the July 13, 2005 Board meeting
- The Department will work to notify the Board if there are any changes in budget projections

OTHER INFORMATION

• **Implementation**

The Department of Health:

The proposal adds a new subsection, subsection 8, to recognize the flexibility the Immunization Program needs to implement this rule. For example, the Department will develop implementation guidelines to assist schools and child care. With board approval, the guidelines may waive or modify immunization requirements under certain circumstances, if a phasing-in period is warranted, and the waiver meets criteria set in the rule.

Schools:

Schools must revise administrative processes in order to accommodate varicella as a newly required vaccine. Administrative processes include school registration and record keeping systems. Schools must also educate parents and staff of the new requirement. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has asked the Immunization Program to consider the following:

- The process for assuring immunization status in kindergarten is well established and adding varicella should not be added workload at this grade level
- In regard to implementation, there are challenges in implementing by age and therefore should be implemented by grade
- Gradual implementation of varicella is critical

Child Care Centers:

The Department will work with child care centers to educate parents and health care providers about varicella requirement. Like schools, record keeping systems would have to be updated. The Department is working with the Department of Social and Health Services to gather information about their implementation challenges.

- **Related Policy Development Activities**

The Department of Health is convening a taskforce with representation from the Vaccine Advisory Committee and the State Board of Health to begin discussions on the creation of criteria to establish the public health benefit of particular vaccines. Criteria established by this group may impact Washington's Universal Distribution System, the department encourages the board to consider these implications as it examines vaccines for school entry.

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